



# State of Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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## Deaf Education FAQ #2

January 10, 2007

The following bulletin highlights some information from the Council's 2006 report on deaf education reform. To request a hard copy of the full report, please email Wes Maynard ([maynardw@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:maynardw@dhw.idaho.gov)) or call 800-433-1323.

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **1. How much does it cost per year to educate a deaf student in a local school?**

Claims have been made that it may only cost \$3,000 per year to educate a deaf student in a mainstream setting. Such claims typically result from data being collapsed for both deaf and hard-of-hearing students. It is critically important when counting costs and students to be served that these two groups are listed separately. There are only 181+ deaf students in the state but over 2,400 hard-of-hearing students.

While some hard-of-hearing students are relatively inexpensive to educate, deaf students are generally expensive to educate in any setting. Local or residential schools usually must pay for full-time sign language interpreter(s) and/or teacher(s) of the deaf, speech and auditory training, assistive listening devices, transportation, counseling, and many other federally mandated resources.

When signing deaf students are grouped in one classroom, five to 10 of them may be largely served by one teacher. When 10 students are placed in 10 different districts, they each must have at least one interpreter to serve them. Clearly, education for a student receiving interpreting services and other accommodations will far exceed \$3,000 per year.

#### **2. What are Cochlear Implants and what are some of the key elements of successful auditory-oral programs?**

"A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard of hearing. The implant is surgically placed under the skin behind the ear. An implant has four basic parts:

- A microphone, which picks up sound from the environment;
- A speech processor, which selects and arranges sounds picked up by the microphone;
- A transmitter and receiver/stimulator, which receive signals from the speech processor and convert them into electric impulses;
- And electrodes, which collect the impulses from the stimulator and send them to the brain.

An implant does not restore or create normal hearing. Instead, under the appropriate conditions, it can give a deaf person a useful auditory understanding of the environment and help him or her to understand speech.”<sup>1</sup>

Some parents choose for their child the auditory-oral method of communication, a method focused on listening and speaking without the use of sign language; other parents choose to employ auditory-oral methods and sign language. As with any type of educational program for deaf children, key elements of success for auditory-oral students are early intervention, strong parental involvement, and expert instruction and oversight in the method. Students with implants are educated in all settings, including mainstream programs, private schools, and residential schools for the deaf.

### **3. What is the difference between a “day campus” and a “mainstreaming magnet program”?**

Certain documents have inadvertently referred to the notions of “day campuses” and “mainstreaming magnet programs” interchangeably. However, in the field of deaf education, the two terms are entirely different.

A day campus is a full-service school for the deaf where students are educated by teachers and staff who communicate fluently in the students' own language. In other words, students receive *direct* instruction with a *critical mass* of peers. Further, day campuses often have athletics and student organizations to facilitate social development.

In contrast, children who attend mainstreaming magnet programs are primarily educated by hearing teachers and staff who communicate to the students *indirectly* through sign language interpreters. Signing deaf or hard-of-hearing students in this setting rarely have opportunities to interact with a critical mass of same-age peers who communicate in the same language.

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, What is a Cochlear Implant?, accessed online June 9, 2006: <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/coch.asp>